

APPLE BLOSSOMS

By Mildred Caroline Goodridge.

"Nettie Gordon is coming home, I hear," observed Richard Lane, meeting his friend, Levi Barnes, on the village street.

"And her sister Constance with her," was the reply, and then the two men looked strangely evasively one into the eyes of the other, acting as though they would welcome further



A Cry of Delight Broke From Her Lips.

discussion of an interesting subject, but each adverse to betray the desire of his mind.

Richard Lane went on his way deeply reflective. He was an odd, studious young man. He looked more grave and settled just now than ever, for two things were pressing on his mind—he was trying to hide a secret, he was in love—hopelessly, he decided.

The belle of the village was Nettie

Gordon and her pretty younger sister, Constance, stood next in favor with the village swains. Richard and Levi had known them for several years. Both were constant visitors at the Gordon home. They were a happy, friendly quartette. Then came a break. A rich relative in the city had invited the girls to pass a social season there.

No word of love had ever passed between the couples. Richard was deeply in love with Nettie. He believed that Barnes was, too. In his humble, self-deprecating way, Richard decided that Nettie, with her bright, joyous ways, longed more for wealth and gaiety than the simple home life he could offer her.

Then the two girls went to the city and word reaching the village of their gay, fashionable life there, both young men concluded that the Gordon girls would never settle down to their old quiet life.

Richard amid his gloomy reverie was addressed twice by a lady he was passing by unnoticed, before he looked up and recognized the mother of the girls.

"I suppose you have heard that the girls are coming home next week, Mr. Lane?" she remarked.

"Yes, I heard of that," responded Richard in his quiet, reserved way. "It will be a great contrast to them, this humdrum life after the gaiety and variety of the city."

"It will be a welcome change, Nettie writes, and Constance, too," said Mrs. Gordon. "I judge from what they write me that they crave the restfulness of the dear old home and the good, loyal friends they have known so long. Nettie is quite ill. The city doctor says she is on the verge of a nervous collapse, the result of late hours and continuous going about. Poor Nettie! Her last letter told of how she would love to get here just as all nature was putting on the green and flowery garb of spring beauty. She said it would be like heaven to look out of her bedroom window